

Equal Opportunities Commission
Report of Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities
Executive Summary

Background

Education issues of ethnic minorities (EMs) have long been a strategic priority area for the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), given that education is an effective means of empowerment. A 2011 “Education for All” report was issued by the first EOC Working Group on Education for EMs (the “Working Group”) and numerous subsequent submissions have been made to the Government and Legislative Council on improving EM students’ learning of Chinese language and integration in schools.

2. In September 2018, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended in its concluding remarks that the Government, “[f]acilitate the smooth integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in Hong Kong, China into the education system, and ensure that children of all ethnicities enjoy their right to inclusive and Chinese-language education.”¹

3. After the 2011 Working Group Report, the Education Bureau instituted some new support measures for NCS students in the 2014-15 school year, namely the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework (the “Learning Framework”) in primary and secondary education; Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) and a tiered funding system for schools admitting NCS students. However, despite these measures, uncertainties and inadequacies in the policies and their implementation remain. In light of these continued concerns with regards to EM education, the Working Group was reconvened with members from the EOC Board and outside experts in January 2018.

4. Over the course of a year and a quarter, the Working Group collected feedback from various stakeholders, including language experts, teachers, principals, NGOs,

¹ UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), *Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China)**, paragraph 24(c), available at <https://urlzs.com/92Roy>

EM parents, NCS students and employers, through group sharing sessions, individual interviews and school visits; and came up with this Report.

Major Concerns

5. The Working Group arrived at the following eight areas of major concern :
 - (a) Gaps in the Learning Framework
 - (b) Unclear indicators to measure the progress of the Learning Framework
 - (c) Insufficient teacher training and support
 - (d) Available Chinese examinations either too hard for second-language learners or too low in standard
 - (e) Limited knowledge and access to information for EM parents on school choice and examination options for their children
 - (f) Need for more integration in schools
 - (g) Lack of continuing Chinese learning opportunities beyond secondary school
 - (h) Inadequate parental support and community support

Recommendations

6. A total of 22 recommendations have been made to address the concerns listed above. To provide equal opportunities for EM students as second language learners in acquiring Chinese language proficiency, the Government and tertiary institutions are recommended to:

- (a) Develop a full-fledged Chinese-as-a-second-language curriculum complete with specific pedagogy, corresponding teaching tools and textbooks, systematic teacher training, etc., which are inadequate in the current Learning Framework.
- (b) Provide learning materials and textbooks tied to the learning outcomes of the required curriculum either produced in-house by the EDB and/or by subsidising publishers to develop second language versions of their mainstream textbooks.
- (c) Explore with help from language experts the introduction of more teaching

aids to improve the teaching of Chinese-as-a-second-language such as Romanisation, audio materials, mobile applications in Chinese/Cantonese pronunciation, story books, etc.

(d) Strengthen teacher training by:

- Introducing training modules in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme for trainee teachers on second language teaching, making it a requirement for Chinese subject teachers and available for teachers of other subjects;
- Making it mandatory for Chinese language teachers of NCS students to undertake training in second language teaching;
- Providing systematic, intensive and longer-duration in-service training courses including pedagogy, skills and practicum instead of sporadic one-off training sessions;
- Incentivise teachers to take up in-service professional training and/or schools to nominate teachers for these training by mirroring the current training support and requirements for teachers teaching students with special educational needs.

(e) Address the possible disadvantage for NCS students arising from the process of internal assessment at senior primary classes (P4-P6) which may affect the allocation banding of students under the Secondary School Place Allocation, for which some if not all schools use the same assessment tools for both Chinese speaking and NCS students in assessing their Chinese proficiency level; and teachers shift from using the Learning Framework to teaching NCS students the mainstream curriculum even though the students cannot cope with the sudden leap.

(f) Improve kindergarten-primary and primary-secondary transition for NCS students by incentivising and encouraging bridging programmes to facilitate their adaptation.

(g) Look into the impact on NCS students of learning Chinese language in Putonghua but other subjects in Cantonese, both non-native languages for them.

(h) Step up community support for Chinese language learning for students and language support for parents provided by NGOs through enhanced funding, guidance and training to NGOs.

- (i) Review the funding mechanism and increase the subsidies for schools admitting less than 10 NCS students.
- (j) Formulate clear and objective indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Framework as a curriculum; collect and share data to gauge the progress of NCS students and measure against the indicators; also commission a longitudinal study to track EM students' trajectory through their education and eventually career attainments and look into any correlation with the enhanced support measures.

7. To ensure EM students' Chinese language learning pathways can help them achieve equal opportunities in academic and career pursuits, the following recommendations are made:

- (a) Review whether NCS learners can cope with the Chinese literature part of the HKDSE Chinese examination involving classical or ancient texts, given that it assumes a strong cultural context which may not be naturally accessible to non-Chinese students.
- (b) Explore with language experts the development of a qualification ladder of Chinese language examination(s) at progressive levels between GCSE/IGCSE and HKDSE, through which a range of language proficiency among NCS (and Chinese speaking) students can be better reflected and recognised.
- (c) Encourage more universities accepting NCS candidates having alternative Chinese language qualifications to give weightage to higher level examinations as compared to GCSE/IGCSE Level, such as GCE AS and A-Level and not rate them all the same, thereby motivating NCS students to strive for higher, achievable proficiency levels.
- (d) Provide continuing Chinese language classes for NCS students at universities to prepare them for local employment.
- (e) Remind schools to provide information to EM parents and students of Chinese language qualification pathways and the consequences of different examination choices on further studies and employment.

- (f) Track and share annual data on NCS students' progress in learning the Chinese language, using the Territory-wide System Assessment figures, open examination results and university admissions.
8. Recommendations on racial integration in schools include:
- (a) Collect and share data on an annual basis that helps monitor EM concentration in schools; also track reverse migration from mainstream to former designated schools.
 - (b) Ensure provision of bilingual information by schools to help with school choices and language support for parents to participate in their children's school life.
 - (c) Make teaching about cultural diversity and inclusion an essential part of the curriculum to foster mutual respect and integration among NCS students and their Chinese peers. The teaching should promote cultural understanding and sensitivity and not reinforce stereotypes.
 - (d) Monitor schools offering English medium of instruction classes to NCS students so that the class arrangement will not lead to separation of NCS students and Chinese examination pathway for lower level and; that active steps are taken to provide opportunities for racial integration.
9. Other recommendations are made as follows:
- (a) Provide funding support for the teaching and learning of non-Chinese subjects taught in Chinese/Cantonese. Strengthen teacher training for teachers of subjects other than Chinese language.
 - (b) Establish a dedicated unit under the Education Bureau that is responsible for overseeing all aspects of NCS education in a comprehensive and holistic manner including admissions, language learning, integration, etc. (Other concerns beyond Chinese learning include shortage of school placement for NCS students with special educational needs, difficulties in coping with other subjects taught in Chinese, etc.).

Conclusion

10. Many of the Working Group's recommendations are reflections of long-held concerns and need speedy action. The top three priority areas for immediate consideration are:

- (a) Plug the gaps in the current Chinese-as-a-second-language learning system to provide a complete curriculum for NCS students**
- (b) Strengthen teacher training to fully equip teachers with both skillset and mindset in teaching second language learners**
- (c) Revisit the Chinese language examination options for second language learners and structure these options into a qualification ladder and pathway**

11. The latest enhanced support measures for NCS students introduced by the Education Bureau have been implemented for the last five years but with issues still persisting, it is a matter of urgency that the system be reviewed. We sincerely recommend the Government to pay attention to our suggestions and deploy substantial resources to put in place an effective and purpose-built system to cater to the needs of NCS students.

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